

What is **BLACK POWDER?**

Black powder is known by several names depending on its use.

All varieties are intimate mixtures of saltpetre (potassium nitrate), charcoal and sulphur which have been processed to form grains of a specific size.

It is called **gunpowder** when used as a propellant in a cannon or firearms; **fuze powder** when used as a delay element in munitions and **blasting powder** when used as an explosive in mining or other civil engineering works. Black Powder was known to the Chinese over 1000 years ago.

It was introduced to the western world in the 13th century and used in warfare from the 14th to the 19th century.

In Victoria, manufacture of black powder began in the 1860s for use in gold mining and in constructing railways, roads and water supply systems.

This nationally significant mill, constructed by ICIANZ Limited in 1942, clearly demonstrates engineering design principles developed over centuries to ensure the safe manufacture of inherently dangerous materials.

Today, black powder is mainly used in fireworks.

19th Century Miners tamping a charge of Black Powder
Image courtesy State Library of Victoria



Cannon firing with Black Powder charge
Image courtesy US National Park Service, Fort Pulaski National Monument



Engineering Heritage National Marker placed on 23 February 2017.

For more information please scan the code or visit www.engineersaustralia.org.au/portal/heritage/search



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